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TAGS: [ECON](#) [APECO](#)
SUBJECT: PNG WILL GENERALLY SUPPORT US APEC PRIORITIES

REF: STATE 121653

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Fitts, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy Port
Moresby, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) In a July 28 discussion of the points in reftel, PNG Senior Official Viali Vagi indicated general support of each U.S. priority without going into any detail beyond what we were able to provide. In particular, he agreed with extending the CTTF mandate. And said it would make sense to have another high-level chairperson.

¶2. (C) Vagi also noted his ongoing discussions with US APEC Senior Official Michalak on US support for an Intellectual Property conference in PNG. He hoped to touch base again on this during the early August preparatory meetings in Brisbane.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Since Prime Minister Somare has assumed the Foreign portfolio (but pays little attention to the detail) Vagi, who works directly for Somare, is in the best position to reflect current thinking on APEC issues. That said, he clearly had not given deep thought to the concerns we raised, but was instead indicating that PNG would continue its generally helpful stance vis a vis the US. On the CTTF issue, that might depend on whether Beijing directly approached Somare with a contrary message. In any event, we would not expect PNG to offer more active than quiet support.

¶4. (C) Concerning the IPR conference, the Somare government has been actively looking for conferences in the year leading up to next spring's elections as a sign of international stature. It also has been genuinely concerned with the counterfeit product side of IPR, notably bogus soaps and toothpastes. Lining up US support would be a feather in Viali's cap and thus offers possible leverage for US priorities. Note: Beijing understands this game. It has effectively played to Somare's sweet tooth for conferences by offering to build a new international conference center, hardly a real development priority given the deterioration of government schools and hospitals.

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